

St Paul's Methodist Church, Crawley

Extraordinary Times

a magazine to help us through COVID-19

Issue 36

November 29th 2020

From your minister...

As I write this on Thursday morning, we've been anxiously awaiting the new Government guidelines for December 2nd onwards, as we come out of national lockdown and return to the "tiered system". I'm sure all of us have been waiting with interest to see which tier we were going to be placed in and, as we now know, it is tier 2. So now everyone is trying to figure out what we are permitted to do and prohibited from doing after Dec 2nd. It is a little head-scrambling, especially because before the national lockdown we were in tier 1 – so we have to get used to new rules once again.

I just want to outline here the implications of tier 2 for the life of our church as we approach the first Sunday in Advent this week.

First and foremost, the good news is that we can reopen our church for public worship from Sunday December 6th. The services will be exactly the same as before; here's the details:

- The service will commence at 10.30am each Sunday from December 6th onwards
- We will be returning to the circuit preaching plan, so we will be welcoming back our local preachers
- The services will be "spoken word" only, and masks must be worn. They will be live streamed on Facebook.
- Under tier 2 regulations, we must only sit with members of our household whilst in church. Outside of the building we are required to maintain the "rule of 6".
- We will continue to share in the Lords Supper using the little "communion cups". Our first communion service is December 6th.

I'm afraid that, in the interests of safety and in order to minimise face to face contact and the risk of infection, we will be unable to resume the children's afternoon service on the second Sunday in the month for the time being.

We will commence lighting our church Advent ring this Sunday November 29th. This Sunday will be the last time that we share our online worship with Trinity in East Grinstead, and we will feature the lighting of our Advent ring as part of the broadcast.

We will of course be lighting the Advent ring in St Pauls as well, each Sunday from Dec 6th onwards during our 10.30am service.

Looking ahead to Christmas, please note the following arrangements:

- On December 20th we will be live streaming our carol service from St Pauls at 4pm. We are unable to welcome you to attend church in person because of the singing ban, but please join us in your home for a good festive carol sing! The service will feature our church choir and young people's singing group.

- On December 24th we will be holding our Midnight Communion service in church. There will be no singing, sadly, but we will of course be sharing in the Lords Supper as Christmas Day arrives. The service will be led by our District Chair Rev David Hinchliffe, and commences at 11.30pm.
- I will be joining you in church on Christmas Day to lead a 30 minute service. Spoken word only I'm afraid.

Lots to think about there! Stand firm, stay safe and let's fight this evil virus together! It's really taken its toll on us, but even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil if our God is with us!
God bless, *Ralph*

What's On

St Paul's is closed until the 2nd of December.

Sunday 29th November (Advent Sunday) 10:45am

Live streamed worship with Rev Ralph Ward from our [Facebook page](#)

Sunday 6th December 10:30am

worship and Communion with Rev Ralph at St Paul's

Every Wed 7:30pm Online Alpha course with Rev Ralph

In your prayers

Give thanks for the good news of vaccines against Covid-19. Give thanks too for the scientists who have worked so hard to develop them.

Continue praying for Howard Llewellyn, Geoff Ridgway, Jean and Geoff Rose, for everyone in our church community who is anxious about their health at present and for others you know who need prayers at this time.

Send your prayer requests to ask.stpauls@gmail.com

Permission must be received from a person before their name is put on the Church prayer list

DIY Advent wreaths

Are you making your own Advent wreaths to use at home? If you are, please send a photo to ask.stpauls@gmail.com so that we can share each other's brilliant efforts! If you have your wreath ready during the live streamed service on the Sundays in Advent, we could all light our candles together and feel more like being part of the whole congregation.



**GOD
IS WITH
US**



For the first time the Methodist Church of Great Britain has come together with charities and other Methodist organisations to retell the good news at the heart of the Christmas story through 24 experiences of people affected by the pandemic and other traumatic events this year

[Read about the campaign here](#)



Are you ready for The Big Church Sing and Nativity?

This Sunday 29th November at 4pm on *All We Can's* YouTube page – you won't want to miss it!

Be part of a huge global

worship event live on the *All We Can* YouTube channel with acclaimed musicians and choirs and the [National Methodist Choir GB](#), alongside an incredible original nativity narrated by *CBeebies* and *Songs of Praise* presenter, Gemma Hunt, and featuring the amazing children of one of our Methodist primary schools, [Wakefield Methodist School](#). They are all performing to support the [All We Can](#) vital Christmas campaign - *Extraordinary Gifts* - for some of the world's poorest communities.

After The Big Church Sing, remember to join *All We Can* on Facebook and YouTube for The Big Christmas Party LIVE across the country - an 'extravaganza' of festive fun, games, quizzes and some brilliant live guests. Let's prepare for this extraordinary Christmas together as one movement born in song!

Methodist Church President and Vice-President react to cuts to the foreign aid budget

Following the announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the foreign aid budget will be cut from 0.7% of national income to 0.5%, the President and Vice-President of the Conference have made the following statements:

The Revd Richard Teal, President of the Conference of the Methodist Church in Britain, said: "To go back on our promises to the world's poorest people would be short-sighted, unprincipled and wrong. The UK has a global reputation for the quality of its international development work. The government has just announced a big increase in spending on defence. In the light of this it is counter-productive to cut the vital aid that helps to build more stable communities and open societies. We are also recognised for our determined support of the international 0.7% target. This huge cut reneges on a commitment that we have made internationally. It is a commitment that our churches have welcomed on many occasions and one that we want to see maintained."

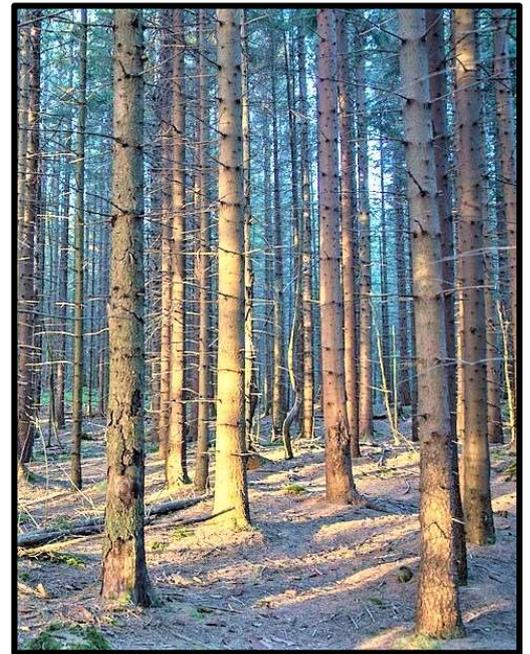
Carolyn Lawrence, Vice-President of the Conference of the Methodist Church in Britain, said: "Our aid programme is vital and effective. It supports education, helps people to escape from chronic poverty and provides women with the opportunities to overcome entrenched discrimination. The Methodist Church in Britain's partners in various parts of the world have direct experience of the value of UK aid and the good that it has brought to their communities. A cut in funding will inevitably undermine vital support to programmes at a time when people are particularly vulnerable. We urge MPs to resist this cut and appeal to the government to think again."

Methodist Church support for Zimbabwe and The Gambia

Some encouraging news in contrast to this week's bad news of UK Government cuts to the aid budget; the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe is giving £20,000 in support during the Covid-19 crisis for vulnerable families, supply of PPE to front-line workers and response to ongoing needs. The Methodist Church in The Gambia is giving £10,000 for humanitarian assistance during the Covid-19 lockdown. Both these have been supported with General Grants from the World Mission Fund and were given alongside the continuing Emergency Coronavirus Appeal from *All We Can* and the Methodist Church in Britain.

My Cathedral - Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

*Like two cathedral towers these stately pines
Uplift their fretted summits tipped with cones;
The arch beneath them is not built with stones,
Not Art but Nature traced these lovely lines,
And carved this graceful arabesque of vines;
No organ but the wind here sighs and moans,
No sepulchre conceals a martyr's bones.
No marble bishop on his tomb reclines.
Enter! the pavement, carpeted with leaves,
Gives back a softened echo to thy tread!
Listen! the choir is singing; all the birds,
In leafy galleries beneath the eaves,
Are singing!
Listen, ere the sound be fled,
And learn there may be worship without words.*



And finally - a few thoughts on chocolate

All you need is love. But a little chocolate now and then doesn't hurt.

Charles M. Schultz

Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get.

Tom Hanks as Forrest Gump

***It was like having a box of chocolates shut in the bedroom drawer.
Until the box was empty it occupied the mind too much.***

Graham Greene, The Heart of the Matter

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